

MYSTERY IN PROMOTION OF THE HEAD OF THE ORDINANCE BOARD!—CROZIER BOOSTED

BY CHARLES EDWARD RUSSELL

William Crozier, captain, United States army, was nominated in March, 1902, to be chief of ordnance, a place that carried with it the rank of brigadier general and meant, according to precedent and practice, that Capt. Crozier should be a member of this board of ordnance and fortification.

When President Roosevelt made this nomination he jumped Capt. Crozier over the heads of 27 officers that outranked him.

Why this amazing leap, nobody seemed to know. There was nothing to show that Crozier was a better man than any of the officers he was jumped over.

But there was a very good reason why he shouldn't have been appointed at all and it lay in the fact that the appointment was utterly illegal. In two ways.

First, the act of February 2, "to increase the efficiency of the permanent military establishment" provided:

"That when vacancies shall occur in the position of chief of any staff corps or department, the president may appoint to such vacancies, by and with the consent of the senate, officers of the army at large not below the rank of lieutenant colonel, and who shall hold office for terms of four years."

Crozier was a captain, which is two ranks below lieutenant colonel.

Second, the act of February 18, 1893, contained the following:

"Provided, that no person shall be a member of or serve in said board (of ordnance and fortification) who has been or is in any manner interested in any invention, device or patent, which, or anything similar to which, has been considered or may be considered by or come before said board for test or adoption; or who is connected with or in the em-

ploy of any manufacturer who has or shall have any contracts with the United States for any ordnance materials."

Capt. Crozier held at that time the following patents:

No. 555,426 (with A. R. Buffington) issued February 25, 1896, for a disappearing gun carriage.

No. 613,252, issued November 1, 1898, for a disappearing gun carriage.

No. 617,879, issued April 9, 1901, for a wire wound gun.

He was therefore most clearly disqualified by the law from any such position.

In spite of all this, his appointment went in and was referred to the senate committee on military affairs.

The minutes of the committee show that the nomination was considered on March 27 and other days and on April 3 it came to a vote.

Then the committee voted 8 to 2 to report the nomination adversely. That is, advise the senate to reject it.

In Washington at that time stories were in circulation of a great pressure that was alleged to be brought to bear in behalf of this nomination. It was reported to extend to the president himself; also to the committee to secure a reconsideration of the adverse vote.

April 24, the matter was reopened in committee and an investigation was ordered of "certain alleged charges"—these being about that gun carriage, for nothing was ever asserted against Gen. Crozier's character.

May 31 the committee agreed to take no further action, but to leave the matter to be disposed of by the senate in executive session.

The adverse vote, therefore, must have still stood.

June 20, the senate, in executive session, confirmed the nomination.